



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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### INTERIOR SECRETARY MANUEL LUJAN SEEKS COORDINATED EFFORT TO FOLLOW INITIAL SUCCESS IN AFRICAN ELEPHANT PROTECTION

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan said today that "a coordinated international effort, strongly supported by the American people, is essential to restore long term health to African elephant herds which have been dangerously reduced by wholesale ivory poaching."

While Lujan is "greatly encouraged" by the recent action of the 91 member nations to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) banning commercial elephant ivory trade among member nations, the Secretary noted that "present numbers of African elephants are far below the level necessary to guarantee the survival of this magnificent species."

Constance Harriman, Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, today told a Congressional Committee that the Interior Department is spearheading a strategic planning process to guide U.S. technical assistance to African nations and assure the proper allocation of grants under the African Elephant Conservation Fund.

(more)

In her testimony Harriman said that "proposals will be solicited from African nations as well as from qualified organizations and individuals, for proposed assistance projects that will emphasize:

- (1) protection of elephant populations;
- (2) protection and management of elephant habitat;
- (3) development of economic incentives, educational programs and/or involvement by local people in management of the elephant; and
- (4) improved data on populations, trends, and annual reproduction and mortality.

Harriman told the Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation Subcommittee of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee that she had recently held a meeting of Federal agencies, including the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Department of State, the Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps to plan coordination of elephant assistance planning and policy development activities.

"The Bush Administration is an enthusiastic participant in the development of an international elephant survival strategy," Lujan said, "but it will succeed only with the cooperation of the rest of the world and the support of the American people and only if it is tailored to the realities of life in elephant range nations.

"I am gratified to see that Japan, the world's largest user of elephant ivory, has joined the ban on ivory trade. I am confident that the American people will support this ban by refusing to countenance any trade in this precious commodity obtained at such a bloody price."